SIR JOHN SOANE'S BEQUEST.

We perceive by an advertisement in the *Athenæum* of the 18th of February, that the annual distribution of the interest of 5,000*l.* in the 3½ per cent. reduced, is to take place on the 24th of this month. This amount was left by the late Sir John Soane, with Instructions in his will, that it should be appropriated to the relief of distressed architects, and the widows and children of architects, left in destitute or distressed circumstances.

In calling attention to this munificent provision of the will of the late Sir John Soane, we cannot forbear to express a hope that it may not remain the only solitary instance (with, we believe, one trivial exception) of such a fund being devoted to alleviate the sufferings of the members and the families of members of this profession.

We regret to know that there are many at this present time applicants for the relief which this fund affords; but however small the dole, it will be found important in the mitigation of distress. Many of the children of the fatherless will have the bread of Sir John's bounty broken to them, and may, as in innumerable other instances of the working of similar bounties, be saved from the present anguish of want, and reared to their country its ornaments.

We regard Sir John Soane's bequests with considerable affection, as the nucleus around which may be formed a broader scheme or provision for the succour and service of the profession, and as furnishing an instance worthy of imitation on the part of the kindred and subordinate branches of the building art. We look back on the period of the founding of hospitals, alms-houses, and colleges, and sigh to think how little provision is being made in these days to meet the forthcoming pressure of a wearing out of the energies of the weakly-struggling, for whom this world has too many sinuosities and opposing circumstances. Would that a retreat for honourable old age, and schools for the ill-provided offspring of the unfortunate, could be reared up amongst us as of old, stimulating and encouraging to the exercise of the humbler virtues of the industrious citizen, instead of exciting to the desperate competitive strife, and its unholy concomitants, which the cold philosophy of our modern times sets forth.

We have gone a little out of our way to indulge in these our fond aspirations, but we return to the resting-point or fulcrum, as we regard this legacy of Sir John Soane, and the accompanying bequest of his museum for the benefit of art, artists, and the public. Those who have not seen his house, and the collection of antiquities and other rarities with which it is filled, can form no idea of the extraordinary value and interest which they present, nor of the great consideration that is due to the memory of the man.

It falls not in our way at present to undertake the task of eulogising or defending,—we have simply to point out as a part of our duty, and for the benefit of the public, what are the advantages to which they are entitled by virtue of Sir John's intentions as defined in his will. It will be seen, on reference to our list of public places of resort, that the museum is open on Tuesdays and Fridays, and we should advise every one, especially of the building craft, to put themselves in the way of obtaining the profit of an inspection. We believe it is only open to country visitants at present, but in April, May, and June, to general ones. The admission is by card, to be obtained as will be directed at the museum.

LABOURERS' COTTAGES.

On estates of moderate extent, where the proprietor looks into every thing himself, much may be done by his personally examining, along with his carpenter, the *Labourers' Cottages* already existing, and ascertaining their present state with reference to the list of essential requisites. This being done, the next step is to devise improvements by draining; by additions of garden ground; by putting the garden and the cottage, if practicable, in a ring fence; and by such alterations and additions to the cottage as may appear necessary for health and comfort. To assist in this manner of improvement the following particulars may be found useful.

Situation.—It ought to be constantly borne in mind, that the main object in building a cottage is to produce a comfortable dwelling; and that for this purpose a dry airy situation, in which, if possible, the ground falls gently from the cottage on every side; an aspect that will allow the sun to shine on every side wall of the cottage a portion of every day in the year; thick walls, and thick or double far-projecting roofs of high pitch, are most desirable requisites. Whether the front, the end, or one side of the cottage is parallel to the adjoining road, ought to be considered a matter of no consequence; indeed, so far from a parallel position being desirable, an oblique one is in general preferable.

Garden.—The garden ought always, if possible, to surround the cottage, and it ought never to be less in extent than a sixth of an acre: but as in cottages already existing it may often be found impracticable to surround the cottage with its garden, the next best arrangements are, to have the garden before, or behind, or on one side; or partly before and behind, and partly on one side. If the main body of the garden must of necessity be separated from the cottage, then there should be a direct communication with it by a path, so as to diminish as much as possible the inconvenience and discomfort of an isolated garden. Cottage allotments, by which are to be understood portions of ground in a field allotted to cottages at some distance, are much better than no gardens at all: but they are far from producing the comfort and enjoyment of a garden in close contact with the cottage to which it belongs.

Materials.—When the walls are of pisé, mud, cob, clay lumps, or any other description of consolidated earth, the thickness of two feet may be obtained in solid materials; and this may also be the case where stone is abundant: but where brick must, of necessity, be used, the thickness of eighteen inches or two feet is to be attained most economically by building the walls with brick on edge hollow, and filling them up with concrete. By this means we form a mass of solid material, which will, of course, have a greater capacity for heat than a hollow wall, and consequently give out more when it is wanted for heating the air of the rooms. The advantages of thick walls, and of thick or double roofs, of high pitch, and projecting at the eaves, with reference to retaining heat, are greater than can well be conceived by those who have not dwelt in a cottage. A high and dry floor is essential, whether this be obtained by placing the cottage on a terrace, or by raising the floor inside, and ascending to it by outside steps.

Designing Cottages.—We have summed up the essential requisites for a labourer's cottage, with a view to convenience, comfort, and other directly useful properties. The following rules are to be considered as additional, and as having for their object to superadd to comfort and convenience the beauties of architectural design and taste.

1. Every exterior wall should shew a plinth at its base, and a frieze or wall plate immediately under the roof. In the case of earthern walls, the plinth should be of brick or stone, and the wall plate of wood. The stones of the plinth should be larger than those used in the plain parts of the wall which are above it; and the upper finishing of the plinth may be the outer edge of a course of slates, flag-stone tiles, or bricks, laid in cement, extending through the entire thickness of the wall, in order to prevent the rising of damp; the appearance of the edge of this course as a moulding or string course crowning the plinth will, the author is highly expressive of utility: or the entire plinth may be built in cement, which will be equally effective in preventing the rising of damp, as well as expressive of that important use.

2. The pitch of the roof, whatever may be the material with which it is covered, should be such as to prevent snow from lying on it; and for this purpose the cross section should generally be an equilateral triangle. Cottages which form gate-lodges in the Grecian or Italian styles form exceptions to this rule; but such lodges never express the same ideas of comfort as high-roofed cottages, with high and bold chimneys. Such lodges, indeed, are commonly called "boxes;" and in fact many of them are so deficient in height, and in every other dimension, that they give rise to ideas the very opposite to those of freedom and comfort.

3. When the wall of a house is built of rubble-work, small stones, or bricks, the sharp right angles formed at the sides of the doors and windows, and at the corners of the building, are liable to be injured by accident or the weather, so that first the mortar of the joints, and afterwards the stones or bricks, drop out. To guard against this evil, or the idea of it, larger stones are used in building jambs and corners, or the jambs are splayed or rounded off, while the lintels and sills of the doors and windows are formed of single stones. Hence all doors and windows in such walls should be surrounded by casings of some sort, or have the jambs, sills, or lintels, splayed. Hence, also, the propriety of quoin-stones at the angles or corners, of coping-stones to the gables, of cut and dressed stones to the chimney-tops, and of larger stones to the plinths than those generally used in the plain parts of the wall above them. In the case of earthen walls, the jambs, sills, and lintels may be of timber, or formed of brick carried up from the plinth.

4. Every stack of chimneys should consist of four parts: a plinth, which should be distinctly seen above the roof; one or more base mouldings, or splayed weatherings resting on the plinth; a shaft rising from the base mouldings, of analogous proportions to the doors and windows; and a capital or cornice moulding and cap of blocking, as a termination to the shaft. The materials of the chimney-tops ought in general to be superior, in quality to those of the walls; for example, if the walls are of rubble-stone, the chimneys should be of stone squared and dressed. When the walls are of earth, the entire stack of chimneys will, of course, be built of brick or stone.

5. When the flues of the chimneys are carried up in the outer wall, there ought always to be a projection outwards in that wall, beneath the chimneys, carried up from the ground, so as to give the necessary space for the flues, the strength of a buttress to the wall, with the sufficient breadth for supporting the chimney tops, and the architectural expression of all these purposes.

6. Eaves-gutters, and ridge and hip coverings, with similar details essential as "finishings," as well as for habitableness and comfort, should never be omitted. The eaves-gutters should be properly supported by brackets, these being of stone or brick, except in the case of earthen walls, where they ought to be of wood.

7. Over the front door or porch of every cottage, there ought to be a worked stone, on which should be cut the name of the cottage, the initials of the first occupant, a number, a sign, or some distinctive mark of the cottage, by which it may be registered in the book of the estate.

8. In rendering cottages ornamental, the most important parts and members of structure are those on which most decoration should be bestowed; such as the porch, entrance-door, window of the principal room, upper parts of the gables, chimney-tops, &c.; and, in ornamenting each particular part, the most important details of that part should receive the highest degree of decoration; for example, the hinges and latch or lock of a door should be made richer than the muntings and styles, and the muntings and styles richer than the panels; and, hence, a door, on which no ornament is bestowed on the latch or hinges ought not to have the muntings, styles, or panels, studded over with ornamental nail-heads, as is often done.

9. Nothing should be introduced in any design, however ornamental it may appear to be, that is at variance with property, comfort, or sound workmanship. The mind revolts at the idea of ornaments that have no connection with construction or use, tacked on the walls of houses.

For the Labourers' Cottages on Estates managed by Agents, we would recommend a tour of inspection by a competent person, and a report drawn up on their present state, and on the means of their improvement. The Report should include the character of the surface soil and subsoil on which each particular cottage stands; the state of surface and underground drainage; the aspect of the different sides of the cottage, and its shelter or exposure; the sources of water and of fuel; the state of the back-yard, &c., if any; the state of the garden;

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